

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3870

INFO AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO PRIORITY

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, VE, UY

SUBJ: VENEZUELA BREAKS RELATIONS WITH URUGUAY

REF: CARACAS 8205; MONTEVIDEO 2493

1. THE GOV CONFIRMED JULY 6 A BREAK IN DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH URUGUAY BY MEANS OF A FOREIGN MINISTRY COMMUNIQUE. AND INFORMAL TRANSLATION OF THE COMMUNIQUE, DATED JULY 5, FOLLOWS: QUOTE WITH REGARD TO THE RECENT EVENTS WHICH HAVE OCCURRED AT THE VENEZUELAN EMBASSY IN MONTEVIDEO, THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS STATES:

1) OUR EMBASSY WAS VIOLATED BY AN URUGUAYAN POLICE OFFICIAL WHO FORCIBLY REMOVED FROM THE EMBASSY A LADY SEEKING ASYLUM. MOREOVER, THE SAME OFFICIAL ATTACKED THE EMBASSY'S COUNSELOR, MR. FRANK BECERRA, WHEN THE LATTER ATTEMPTED TO INTERVENE.

2) IN VIEW OF THE FACT THAT THE URUGUAYAN GOVERNMENT HAS NOT YET GIVEN A SATISFACTORY EXPLANATION OF WHAT HAPPENED NOR HAS IT RETURNED THE LADY IN QUESTION, THE VENEZUELAN GOVERNMENT HAS INSTRUCTED OUR AMBASSADOR IN URUGUAY TO INFORM THE GOVERNMENT OF THAT COUNTRY OF OUR DECISION TO SUSPEND DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES.

3) NOTWITHSTANDING THE VENEZUELAN GOVERNMENT'S UNCEASING AND SINCERE EFFORTS FOR LATIN AMERICAN SOLIDARITY, IT IS CONSIDERED

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THAT THE DECISION TAKEN IN THIS CASE IS THE ONLY ONE COMPATIBLE

WITH OUR CONCEPT OF NATIONAL DIGNITY AND RESPECT FOR INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS AND IT IS HOPED THAT THIS STEP WILL NOT TARNISH THE FRATERNAL RELATIONS WHICH HAVE ALWAYS LINKED THE VENEZUELAN AND URUGUAYAN PEOPLES.

4) THE GOVERNMENT OF OUR SISTER REPUBLIC OF COLOMBIA HAS AGREED TO ASSUEM CHARGE OF VENEZUELAN INTERESTS IN URUGUAY AND OF FIVE EXILES PRESENTLY IN OUR EMBASSY.
5) THE VENEZUELAN AMBASSADOR AND DIPLOMATIC PERSONNEL HAVE BEEN INSTRUCTED TO RETURN TO VENEZUELA. UNQUOTE.

2. ASKED THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A BREAK IN RELATIONS AND A SUSPENSION OF RELATIONS, FOREIGN MINISTER ESCOVAR SALOM STATED JULY 6 THAT THEY WERE THE SAME THING. ELABORATING ON THE MINISTRY'S COMMUNIQUE, ESCOVAR SAID THE GOV'S ACTION WAS IN DEFENSE OF THE RIGHT OF ASYLUM "WHICH FORMS PART OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTIONAL SYSTEM. VENEZUELA CANNOT AND WILL NOT GIVE AWAY ANY PART OF THE RIGHT OF ASYLUM". ESCOVAR INDICATED THAT IT WAS UNCLEAR WHICH COUNTRY HAD BROKEN RELATIONS FIRST, ALTHOUGH THE GOV ARRIVED AT ITS DECISION LATE JULY 5. HE ADDED THAT THE GOV IS CONSIDERING A PROTEST TO THE OAS.

3. ACCION DEMOCRATICA PRESIDENT AND PRESIDENT OF THE CONGRESS GONZALO BARRIOS JULY 6 CALLED THE BREAK IN RELATIONS "SAD BUT INEVITABLE." HE ADDED THAT VENEZUELA HAD BEEN A VICTIM OF THE "BAD POLITICAL SITUATION" IN URUGUAY. DEPUTY EDUARDO FERNANDEZ, FLOOR LEADER FOR THE OPPOSITION SOCIAL CHRISTIAN COPEI PARTY, SUPPORTED THE GOV'S DECISION SAYING, "WE HAVE BEEN THE PROPONENTS OF THE THESIS OF DEMOCRATIC PLURALISM BUT WE UNDERSTAND THAT THERE ARE FUNDAMENTAL ELEMENTS BEHIND THE DECISION OF THE GOVERNMENT."

4. VENEZUELAN AMBASSADOR TO URUGUAY JULIO RAMOS ACCOMPANIED BY COUNSELOR BECERRA WILL REPORTEDLY DEPART URUGUAY ON JULY 8. URUGUAYAN AMBASSADOR TO VENEZUELA JULIO LUPINACCI, WHO ARRIVED BACK IN CARACAS JULY 6 FROM MONTEVIDEO, TOLD THE PRESS THAT HE HOPED RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES WOULD BE REESTABLISHED SOON. HE INDICATED THAT HE WILL BE RETURNING TO URUGUAY SHORTLY.

5. COMMENT. AFTER PRESIDENT PEREZ'S ULTIMATUM OF LAST WEEK (CARACAS 8163), HE HAD LITTLE CHOICE BUT TO BREAK RELATIONS
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WHEN THE GOU FAILED TO RETURN THE WOMAN SEEKING ASYLUM TO THE VENEZUELAN EMBASSY. FURTHERMORE, THE GOV WAS BEGINNING TO BE CRITICIZED LOCALLY FOR MOVING TOO SLOWLY WITH REGARD TO THE INCIDENT. IT IS PROBABLE THAT THE GOV, IN KEEPING WITH ITS ACTIVIST POSITION ON LATIN AMERICAN HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS, WILL TAKE THE MATTER TO THE OAS.
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